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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine to what degree medical literature is accessible and available to physicians in Essex County (Ontario). There are no medical schools in Essex County and the biomedical collections maintained by the six hospitals in the County and the Essex County Medical Association represent the only access in the County to medical literature. The approach used to determine the quality of library service was to compare existing services and conditions with printed standards for hospital libraries. A questionnaire dealing with personnel, physical facilities and collections was sent to each of the six hospitals, and the investigator visited five of the Essex County hospitals. The data received from each of the hospitals were then compared with recommended standards for hospital libraries as prepared by the American Library Association in 1953. The basic conclusion of this investigation was that the majority of physicians do not have access to the total array of medical literature through the provision of interlibrary loan service, nor are there adequate basic collections immediately available to physicians in Essex County. This report was submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science (Wayne State University). (Author/JB)

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WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
School of Medicine
Library
Biomedical Information Service Center

Report

No. 44

An Evaluation of Hospital Library Service to Physicians in Essex County*

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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by

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INTRODUCTION

In 1965 the U. S. Congress passed the Medical Library Assistance Act which was intended to remedy medical library deficiencies in the U.S. by an appropriation of $105,000,000 to be funded over a five year period. During the debates in the House of Representatives, Mr. Smith supplied excellent justification for the passage of this Act.

> The key to the communication of health information is the biomedical library. These libraries are multipurpose institutions.... They acquire, organize, store, and service published information for all these purposes.
>
> The health science libraries of the country are in serious trouble.... We are investing large sums of money in programs of research, education, and health service without making the findings available to those who need the information. Unless the medical research scientists and physicians have available complete and up-to-the-minute information on new medical discoveries and practices, progress in the understanding of disease and disability will be slowed. Unless the practicing physician has the latest and best information on diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation, the well-being of the patient may be at stake. (1)

The quality of library service is of such importance to physicians that when President Johnson signed the Medical Library Assistance Act into law on October 22, 1965, he made the following comments.

> The volume of published research in the field of medicine doubles every ten years.... This creative process cannot go on unless the results of scientific findings are available to practicing physicians and to health workers across the country. The nation's medical libraries are a vital link between medical education, practice and research. (2)

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(1) U.S., Congress, House. An Act to Amend the Public Health Service Act, Pub. L. 89-291, 89th Cong., 1st sess., H.R. 3142, p. 25775.

(2) "Medical Library Assistance Act Becomes Law," Medical Library Association Bulletin, LIV (January, 1966), 72.

It is essential for physicians to be quickly and completely informed about the latest medical discoveries and to accomplish this, it is necessary that they have access to the ever-increasing quantity of medical literature. This service has to be provided through a biomedical library. The investigator wished to determine to what degree medical literature is accessible and available to physicians in Essex County. This can be ascertained through an analysis of the quality of library service being offered to the physicians.

Essex County is located in southwestern Ontario with the concentration of population in the Windsor area. There are four general hospitals and one hospital for the chronically ill in Windsor: Grace Hospital, Hotel Dieu Hospital, I.O.D.E. Memorial Hospital, Metropolitan General Hospital, and Riverview Hospital. The other hospital in Essex County is Leamington District Memorial Hospital in Leamington. These six hospitals maintain biomedical collections for use by those physicians having staff appointments with these hospitals. Five of the hospitals in Essex County have been accredited by the Canadian Council on Hospital Accreditation and each has more than 100 beds. There are no medical schools in Essex County and the library service offered by the six hospitals and the collection maintained by the Essex County Medical Association represent the only access in the County to medical literature.

The approach used by the investigator to determine the quality of library service available to physicians was to compare existing services and conditions with printed standards for hospital libraries. The quality of library service being provided will determine the accessibility and availability of literature.

A two page questionnaire was sent to each of the six hospitals in order to obtain the information required to conduct this investigation. The questionnaire was divided into three sections and dealt with personnel, physical facilities and collections. In addition, the writer visited five of the Essex County hospitals.

The data received from each of the hospitals were then compared with recommended standards for hospital libraries as prepared by the American Library Association in 1953. These standards had been accepted and endorsed by the American Hospital Association, American College of Surgeons, Medical Library Association, and the Special Libraries Association in the U. S. These 1953 standards are currently under major revision by the American Library Association. The 1953 American standards for hospital libraries were utilized by the writer since no printed standards for hospital libraries have been published in Canada.

HOSPITAL LIBRARY SERVICE TO PHYSICIANS IN ESSEX COUNTY

Library Personnel

The standards state that the individual in charge of the library should be a certified medical librarian. The medical librarian's

professional tasks would include the selection of medical and allied scientific literature, the rendering of bibliographic, reference and interlibrary loan services, and the provision of translations and abstracts. Her professional duties would also include classifying and cataloging the collection and orienting the medical staff to the services and functions of the medical library.

Table 1

Library Personnel in Hospitals in Essex County

Hospital Number	Education of Person Responsible for the Library	Number of Hours Devoted to Library Work Weekly
1	High school graduate	18-3/4
2	High school graduate	1
3	High school graduate	2-1/2
4	Registered nurse	18
5	Did not complete high school	8
6	Did not indicate	5

From the questionnaire, it was discovered that no certified medical librarian has charge of any of the hospital staff libraries in Essex County. None of the library personnel was a university graduate and none had prior experience working in a library. One library employee had attended two short workshops in librarianship but none had had extensive professional library education.

In the six hospitals the individuals responsible for the library were full-time employees with only a portion of their time being devoted to library duties. The number of hours ranged from 1 to 18-3/4 hours per week with an average in the six hospitals of slightly less than nine hours per week being devoted to library tasks. No medical research was being conducted through the rendering of bibliographic and reference work and the chief tasks of the library personnel were predominantly clerical in nature. In five of the hospitals, no attempt was being made to catalog and classify the collection and no translating or abstracting services were being provided by library employees in any of the hospitals. One of the most important services that should be provided by library employees is interlibrary loan service since it is no longer possible for a hospital library to have on its shelves all books or periodicals that might be requested by the physicians. Esterquest states that a hospital library must use the resources of a nearby

(3) Hospital Libraries Division, American Library Association, Hospital Libraries, Objectives and Standards. (Chicago, American Library Association, 1953)

"reservoir" library. He defines a reservoir library as being "a large research library with rich resources of books and periodicals and with a commitment to supplyment through interlibrary loan the resources of nearly smaller libraries". (4) Since it is not possible for a hospital library to have all the medical resources in its own library, it is necessary then to engage in interlibrary loans. Only one hospital library in Essex County is providing this service to the physicians who have staff appointments with that hospital.

> One important criteria in the hospital environment in judging the quality of library service available is whether the means are available for the individual physician to have access to the area's library resources through interlibrary loan. Without such a service, the physician cannot be said to have access to the scholarly record of medicine. (5)

In other words, since the hospital library cannot possibly possess the whole array of medical literature on its own premises, potential access to all journals and books must come through interlibrary loan. Following this criteria for judging the quality of library service, only those physicians who have staff appointments with the one hospital in Essex County providing interlibrary loan service have potential access to the scholarly record of medicine. There are twenty-one physicians having active staff appointments with this one hospital representing approximately 7% of the total number of physicians in Essex County. The other 93% cannot be said to have access to the total record of medicine through library service in hospitals in Essex County.

Physical Facilities

The medical library should be located in an area in the hospital where it is conveniently accessible to physicians and should be attractively and comfortably furnished. Sufficient stack space should be available for the expansion of the collection. An office and workroom should be provided for the medical librarian. (6)

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(4) E. R. Esterquest, "Medical Library Service in Hospitals," Medical Library Association Bulletin, LII (January, 1964), 256.

(5) Vern M. Pings, Availability of Hospital Health Science Library Service to Wayne County Medical Society Members. No. 36 (Detroit: Wayne State University School of Medicine Library and Biomedical Information Service Center, 1967), p.2.

(6) Hospital Libraries Division, op. cit.

Table 2

Physical Facilities of Libraries
in Essex County Hospitals

Hospital Number	Library Room	Centrally Located in Hospital	Number of Hours of Service	Number of Readers' Seats
1	Yes	Yes	42.5 hrs. weekly	16
2	Yes	Yes	24 hrs. daily	6
3	Yes	Yes	24 hrs. daily	2
4	Yes	Yes	24 hrs. daily	9
5	Yes	Yes	57 hrs. weekly	7
6	Yes	Yes	24 hrs. daily	18

Each hospital in Essex County maintains a small room for the library with only one hospital providing a separate office for the medical librarian. All six library rooms are conveniently located in the hospital. Physicians have access to the library rooms twenty-four hours a day in four of the hospitals and in the other two hospitals the library room is open forty-two hours a week in one and fifty-seven hours per week in the other. The number of readers' seats in the library rooms ranged from two to eighteen in five of the hospitals with five hospitals also providing desks for use by the physicians.

Five of the library rooms were extremely small and would not be sufficiently large to al'ow for any future expansion of the collections nor are they currently large enough to allow 25-30 square feet per reader space. (7) Only two could be described as being comfortably and attractively furnished.

Collections

Standards for hospital libraries indicate that for a hospital of 100 beds or over, the collection should contain a minimum of 1,000 volumes of medical and allied scientific literature and most of these should have been purchased within the last ten years. The library should receive not less than twenty-five periodicals and possess the most important medical and allied scientific indexes.

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(7) Henry J. Gartland, "Blueprint for a Professional Hospital Library". Hospitals, XXXVIII (June 16, 1964) p. 58.

Table 3

Collections in Hospital Libraries in Essex County

Hospital Number	Number of books Less than 10 years old	Number of journals subscribed to	Number of Indexes
1	697	51	0
2	50	12	0
3	66	30	0
4	54	22	one ordered
5	94	35	0
6	100	10	0

Applying these standards to the six hospital libraries in Essex County, no library meets the minimum book requirement. Considering only books which had been purchased within the past ten years, the number of books in the collections ranged from 50 to 697 with a combined total of 1061 books in the six hospitals. This figure indicates that the cumulative total of books in the six hospitals in Essex County represents only 17.6 % of the total basic minimum book requirement. Periodical collections fared better with journal subscriptions ranging from ten to fifty-one, and with three of the six hospitals meeting the minimum requirement of twenty-five.

No hospitals in Essex County currently have any medical or scientific indexes in their collections although one hospital indicated that Index Medicus has been ordered but has not yet arrived.

ASSESSMENT OF THE VALUE OF A BIOMEDICAL COLLECTION WITH LIMITED PHYSICAL ACCESS

For a number of years the Essex County Medical Association has maintained a medical literature collection which is housed in the University of Windsor Library. The cost of maintaining this collection is $6.00 per annum for each member, which covers the expenditure for journal subscriptions and the cost of rental of space in the University of Windsor Library. According to some Society members, the book collection has little value since it is too obsolete a collection to serve any usefulness. The strength of the collection rests in its periodical collection now totalling thirty-five subscriptions.

Essex County Medical Association members have not been actively utilizing this medical literature and the Association questioned the advisability of continuing to maintain it. A questionnaire was prepared by the Library Committee of the Association and distributed to its membership in an attempt to determine the opinions of the physicians with regard to this collection. Approximately 300 questionnaires were mailed to the members late in 1967, and 173 responses were received.

In the questionnaire, each physician was given the following alternatives as to what he thought should be the future of the collection: (1) discontinuance of the collection, (2) maintenance of the collection in its present location and size, (3) maintenance in present location but expanded in size, and (4) integration with a hospital library at either Hotel Dieu Hospital, Metropolitan Hospital, or Grace Hospital.

Table 4

Attitudes of Physicians Toward the Essex County Medical Association Collection

	Affirmative Response	Per Cent of Total
Discontinue library	27	15.6
Maintain in present size and location	6	3.4
Maintain in present location but expand in size	17	9.9
Integrate with a hospital library	121	69.9
Other	2	1.1

As can be seen from Table 4, of the physicians who replied to the questionnaire, 15.6% favored discontinuance of the collection. Of the physicians who favored retention 13% wished the collection to continue to be maintained in its present location, and 70% thought the collection should be integrated with one of the hospital libraries. Table 5 shows the choice of hospital where this mergence should occur by these 121 physicians.

Table 5

Hospitals with which Mergence was Favored

Name of Hospital	% of Total Favoring Integration with Hospital	% of Total Responding to Questionnaire
Grace	9.09	6.3
Hotel Dieu	59.5	41.6
I.O.D.E. Memorial	.8	.5
Metropolitan	15.7	10.9
Hotel Dieu or Metropolitan	2.4	1.7
Hotel Dieu or Grace	.8	.5
Hotel Dieu, Grace, or Metropolitan	11.5	8.0

Although almost 60% of the physicians indicated Hotel Dieu would be their choice, another eighteen gave a choice of two or three hospitals but in each case, Hotel Dieu was one of the alternatives names.

Another question asked in this questionnaire was whether or not the physicians had utilized the collection at the University of Windsor within the past two years. Only 27% of the physicians indicated that they had used the collection. Table 6 expressed the opinions of only those physicians who have utilized the collection in the past two years.

Table 6

Opinions of Physicians who have Utilized
The Collection in the Past Two Years

	Number	%
Discontinue library	0	0
Maintain in present size and location	4	8.69
Maintain in present location but expand in size	10	21.73
Integrate with Metropolitan	7	15.21
Integrate with Grace	5	10.86
Integrate with Hotel Dieu	16	34.78
Integrate with Hotel Dieu or Metropolitan	1	2.17
Integrate with Hotel Dieu or Grace	1	2.17
Integrate with Hotel Dieu, Grace, or Metropolitan	1	2.17
Other	1	2.17

Of the physicians who have utilized the Society's collection within the past two years, none favored discontinuance of the collection and 30% appeared to be satisfied with the present location. A large majority of this group (67%) indicated that they desired to have the collection integrated with a hospital library and the majority responded that Hotel Dieu Hospital would be their choice where this mergence should occur.

Table 7

Comparison of Attitudes of Physicians who were Users of the Library with the Non-user Group

	% of Users	% of Non-users
Discontinue library	0	21.25
Maintain in present size and location	8.69	1.5
Maintain in present location but expand in size	21.73	5.5
Integrate with I.O.D.E. Memorial	0	.7
Integrate with Metropolitan	15.21	9.44
Integrate with Grace	10.86	4.72
Integrate with Hotel Dieu	34.78	44.09
Integrate with Hotel Dieu or Metropolitan	2.17	1.5
Integrate with Hotel Dieu or Grace	2.17	.0
Integrate with Hotel Dieu, Grace, or Metropolitan	2.17	10.23
Other	2.17	.7

Table 7 indicates that, of the physicians who have utilized the collection in the past two years, 67% desired to have the collection merged with a hospital library as compared to 71% in the non-user group. Both groups favored integration with the library at Hotel Dieu Hospital.

None of the users of the collection favored discontinuance of the collection, but in the non-user group 21% stated that they favored discontinuance of the collection. It is apparent that in the overall picture of physicians who had responded to this questionnaire 16% have not utilized the collection in the past two years and would not use it in the future since they indicated that it would be their desire to discontinue the Essex County Medical Association collection.

In the user group 30% of the physicians were satisfied with the present location, whereas in the non-user group only 7% approved of the University of Windsor as being the location in which the collection should be housed. The non-user group expressed great dissatisfaction with present location, and this would indicate a major reason why they have not been utilizing the Society's collection.

Consolidating the Society's books and journals with a hospital's staff library would result in a larger collection in one location. Of those physicians who responded to the questionnaire, seventeen expressed the desire to have the collection maintained in its present location but expanded in size, and 121 indicated the desire to have the collection merged with one of the hospital libraries. The total number of physicians favoring a larger collection in one location was 138, or close to 80% of the physicians who responded to the questionnaire. Maintaining a larger collection in one location would result in medical literature being more conveniently available to physicians. The response to the questionnaire might be summarized:

1. Of the physicians who replied to the questionnaire, the majority agreed that the collection should continue to remain in existence.

2. Merging the collection with one of the local hospital libraries was the choice of the majority of physicians.

3. Hotel Dieu Hospital was the most frequently named hospital where this consolidation should occur.

4. The vast majority of the physicians had not utilized the collection at the University of Windsor within the past two years.

One could conclude since the majority of the physicians have not utilized the collection at the University of Windsor within the past two years and yet they favored retention of the Society's collection, it is evident that the lack of utilization must be due to its present location. The University of Windsor is not centrally located in the city, nor is it in close proximity to most of the hospitals. Therefore, it is not conveniently available to most physicians, which would explain the lack of utilization of the collection.

Hotel Dieu Hospital proved to be the hospital with which the greatest majority favored consolidation for the following reason. This hospital has approximately 200 active staff members, which represents about 66% of all physicians in Essex County. It appears that a collection with limited physical access has little value to physicians in Essex County, and for a library collection to be useful to them, it is desirable that the collection be maintained in the hospital where they have staff appointments. In other words, in Essex County the majority of the physicians agreed that medical literature should be in a location which is convenient to them, and this location should be the particular hospital which is their work environment.

CONCLUSIONS

Two important keys in determining whether quality library service is being offered are availability and accessibility of literature. Approximately 10,000 health science journals are presently being published throughout the world, and it is an impossibility for each medical library to be in a position to purchase all of these journals. It is imperative that physicians have access to all new medical information and this accessibility to knowledge can only come through the provision of interlibrary loan service. The Treadwell Library in Boston a few years ago discovered that even with an annual budget of $35,000, the library still could not meet the literature needs of the hospital medical personnel. To supplement the collection it was necessary to utilize the resources of other libraries through interlibrary loan service. (8)

Five of the six hospital staff libraries in Essex County are not providing this very essential service to the physicians. Approximately 93% of the physicians in the County do not have staff appointments with hospitals providing interlibrary loan service. The Canadian Council on Hospital Accreditation says that "full use should be made of the lending library or reference facilities of central libraries of other hospitals."(9) Many important and necessary library services are not being provided by the library staff in the six hospitals in Essex County, and this could possibly be explained by the lack of any professionally educated librarians operating the hospital staff libraries.

> The contribution that health science libraries can make to the advancement of medical knowledge and medical service is directly related to the caliber and number of people who staff them.... Today it is essential that the personnel responsible for the operation and future planning of the medical libraries have special training in medical librarianship. (10)

The availability of literature is related to location, size and quality of the collections at the immediate disposal of physicians. From the analysis of the Essex County Medical Society questionnaire it seems clear that a collection to be useful to a physician should be located in a hospital where he has staff privileges. Maintaining the Society's collection at the University of Windsor proved to be of little value to physicians, and it was the desire of the majority to have this collection integrated with a hospital library where it would be conveniently available to them.

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(8) Esterquest, op. cit.

(9) Canadian Council on Hospital Accreditation, The Accreditation Guide Compendium (Toronto: Canadian Council on Hospital Accreditation, 1967), p.65.

(10) U. S., Congress, House, op. cit.

Availability is also related to the size of the collections immediately at the disposal of physicians. While a library will find it necessary to supplement their collection through the provision of interlibrary loan service, it is nevertheless necessary for each hospital to maintain an adequate basic library on its premises.

> A doctor frequently wants to review medical literature during diagnostic work-up or for management of a difficult or unusual case. He should not have to run home, or to another hospital or to a central library to find the reference he needs. (11)

Sizes of book collections in the hospitals in Essex County are far below the minimum requirements recommended by the American Library Association. The cumulative total of books found in the six hospital staff libraries in Essex County represented only 17.6% of the total number that should be possessed by the six hospitals. In the area of journals, it was discovered that only three hospitals are meeting the minimum requirement of twenty-five subscriptions.

This investigation has revealed that the majority of physicians do not have access to the total array of medical literature through the provision of interlibrary loan service, nor are there adequate basic collections immediately available to physicians in Essex County.

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(11) Canadian Council on Hospital Accreditation, op. cit. p. 65.